

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 19, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write to recommend a focused release of humanitarian funds to address the imminent economic and humanitarian disasters facing the Afghan people.

As we all know, United States forces invaded Afghanistan in 2001 following the devastating September 11th attacks that were planned by Al-Qaeda terrorists. Al-Qaeda was able to train, plan, and finance these attacks from their Afghan safe haven because of the collapse of Afghanistan's state, economy, and society following years of civil war after Soviet forces withdrew.

Today, we have not just a moral obligation to help the Afghan people, but a national interest in preventing Afghanistan from once again becoming a safe haven for our enemies. While the Taliban rapidly overwhelmed the Ghani government's forces in August of 2021, the Taliban's control is being violently contested by the ISIS-affiliate Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP). We cannot allow Afghanistan to once again become a breeding ground for terrorist organizations intent on killing Americans and attacking our nation, but that dreadful scenario will be made more likely if we fail to address the heart-wrenching humanitarian situation unfolding there today.

On December 15, 2021 we wrote a letter with a series of recommendations to address the crisis in Afghanistan. One of those recommendations was for the administration to release portions of frozen Afghan assets through appropriate United Nations agencies to help alleviate the dire economic and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.

Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, the U.S. Treasury Department froze nearly \$7 billion in Afghan assets in the New York Federal Reserve. On September 13, 2021 some of the families of September 11th terror attack victims, and other victims of terrorism, obtained writs against these funds pursuant to pending litigation, and we recognize that a court may order some portion of these funds to be set aside pending consideration of these claims. At the same time, we urge the administration to ensure that a substantial share of the frozen assets also be used now to alleviate the suffering of the Afghan people, which was the original intent of

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the funds.

As you know, these funds do not and never did belong to the Taliban, but rather constituted the foreign reserves of the legitimate government that was elected by the Afghan people, and was our ally in fighting terrorism. For 20 years, the United States and other international donors provided assistance to that government and to other Afghan institutions to support the educational advancement and prosperity of the Afghan people, and enormous gains were made.

We believe that the Afghan people's frozen assets should continue to be used to help them. We believe this can be done without supporting the Taliban, including by distributing funds directly through United Nations agencies leading the humanitarian effort.

According to the United Nation's most recent Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report on Afghanistan, 22.8 million Afghans, over half of the country's population, are facing food insecurity, including 3 million children under the age of five.¹ Millions of Afghans have gone without pay for months or have been unable to withdraw their money from banks, forcing them to sell furniture, family heirlooms, and their homes just to afford bread for their families. There are reports of families having to sell their daughters just to save their other children from starvation.²

The crux of the problem is liquidity. Afghan banks have imposed withdrawal limits due to limited access to dollars. Afghan businesses have begun hoarding hard currency and prices are rising daily, including for flour, rice, bread, and other necessities. The Afghan people are bearing the burden of the country's liquidity crisis and the administration must move quickly to mitigate the growing economic crisis.

We urge you to release a substantial portion of the frozen assets, including to support teacher and civil servant pay through UN agencies, while designating a private bank to perform central bank functions.

When the last American troops left Afghanistan, the United States promised that we would not abandon Afghanistan. That is a mistake we made once before with grave consequences for our own security, as well as for the Afghan people. We must uphold our promise and do what is necessary to ensure that the progress made over the last 20 years is not lost.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to consulting with you on the path forward.

¹ "Integrated Food Security Classification – Afghanistan," October 2021.

https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Afghanistan_AcuteFoodInsec_2021Oct2022Mar_report.pdf

² Shah, Saeed, "As Afghanistan Sinks Into Destitution, Some Sell Children to Survive," *Wall Street Journal*, October 16, 2021. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/as-afghanistan-sinks-into-destitution-some-sell-children-to-survive-11634387501>

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Respectfully,



Jason Crow
Member of Congress



Tom Malinowski
Member of Congress



Peter Meijer
Member of Congress



Chairman Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



Chairman Adam Schiff
Member of Congress



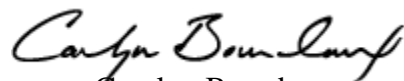
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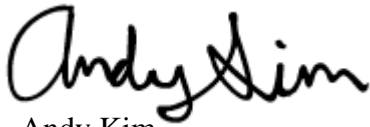


Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress



Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

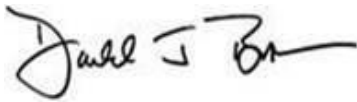
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